

NU men's schedule dangerous

At some point in his first season, Nebraska Basketball Coach Barry Collier might want to seek some counsel from Colorado Football Coach Gary Barnett.



Joshua Camenzind

Barnett had a bone to pick with Big 12 Conference officials over his team's having to play the likes of Kansas State, Texas A&M and Texas back to back to back after going through a murderous nonconference slate that included Colorado State, USC and Washington.

Barnett's squad was only 1-5 after the six-game stretch. Collier might want to give old Gary a holler because his team may have a similar look when the middle of February rolls around.

NU's first six games in conference play are murderous to say the least - all six made the Big Dance in 2000.

NU opens at Missouri, is home against Texas, travels to Kansas, plays host to Iowa State and Missouri, and finally, goes to Oklahoma.

But I am getting a little ahead of myself here. Much like CU's nonconference schedule, NU's offers very few breaks for an 11-win team from a year ago.

The 2000-2001 schedule will offer NU stiff test after stiff test in a season in which minor quizzes will be hard to handle. But the tests are a little deceptive.

You won't find Top 25 powers like Indiana, Illinois, Iowa or DePaul on this year's schedule like on the Missouri Tigers' schedule. What you will find is seven non-conference opponents with a legitimate shot at the Big Dance five months from now.

And it all starts Saturday with a trip to Tulsa, Okla., to face Oral Roberts. The Golden Eagles are coming off a 13-17 campaign, losing three double-figure scorers.

But the most important statistic of the game lies in the site - the Mabee Center. It's not the Bob Devaney Sports Center, and that means trouble.

Last season's Husker team went winless on the road for the first time since 1960. A win against Oral Roberts would be huge for NU but wouldn't seem all that great to the common fan.

But that is the life of higher expectations for Collier, who has had his hands full with meshing old and new players with his style. Getting them to run the same play (or a play at all) is progress over last year, but Collier must now start preparing his team for a tough nonconference schedule.

After Nebraska's game with Eastern Illinois, who lost to NU in double overtime last season, the Husker's home slate gets significantly tougher. NU faces Winthrop, Murray State and Creighton, all NCAA qualifiers last season.

The only break in the schedule seems to come fittingly in the Husker Team Classic on Dec. 8 and 9, but NU's first-round opponent, the University of Missouri-Kansas City, won 16 games last season and returns five starters.

And that's just a gander at the home schedule.

NU must travel to Pittsburgh on Dec. 2 to face former teammate Chad Johnson. And even though the football team won't be going to the Orange Bowl this January, the basketball team plays Miami, a Sweet 16 team last season, on Dec. 16 in the Orange Bowl Classic.

From that tropical pit stop, Nebraska will continue south to San Juan, Puerto Rico, for the San Juan Shootout.

The Huskers don't receive a break there as they face Iona - a 20-game winner and NCAA qualifier last season - in the first round. Other possible opponents include Kent State (23 wins last year and an NCAA qualifier), Southern Methodist (21 wins with possible All-American Jeryl Sasser) and Evansville (18 wins).

The road won't get any easier in NU's trip back from paradise. A game at Minnesota is NU's last road game before the Big 12 Conference season begins.

It is unlikely that this schedule will offer many breaks for Collier's gang. But any improvement from an 11-19 campaign will be accepted from this casual observer.

Great things come to those who wait - so wait.

Huskies get rematch with NU in NCAAs

■ NU's 2-0 win over UConn doesn't mean the Huskers will walk over the No. 13 Huskies, according to Coach John Walker.

BY JAMIE SUHR

Looking at the game film from its 2-0 win at Connecticut earlier in the year, Nebraska soccer Coach John Walker doesn't see any weaknesses or areas to exploit now that the two will meet in the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament.

"It was a pretty even game," Walker said.

"They're the best team we've played all year ... we just need to finish and do a tremendous job defensively."

Last week, No. 2-ranked and third-seeded NU (22-1) faced a Richmond team competing in its first-ever NCAA Tournament.

UConn (16-6-2), on the other hand, is battle-tested and tournament savvy.

The No. 13 team in the country fought No. 1 seed Notre Dame to a 0-0 tie in the regular season and met again in the championship of the Big East Conference. The Fighting Irish won round two, 1-0.

In those two games, the Huskies out-shot the Irish 24-17, and NU out-shot UConn 16-13. Yet the Huskies were unable to register a goal.

"They always play a tough schedule, so they drop a couple of games early in the season, but they're always in the Sweet 16," Walker said.

Walker said the team didn't focus much on making adjustments from the teams' previous encounter, instead placing the burden on his players to continue what they've been doing all year.

While Walker wasn't concerned

with any on-the-field changes, Christine Latham, the Big 12 Conference Player of the Year, said the Husker forwards would have to play defensively minded.

The forward said the team had been working on making the transition from offense to defense because of the teams' conflicting styles.

"The strikers will have to be more aware defensively than in other games because (UConn forwards) are quite skilled," Latham said.

The Huskies are led by forward and midfielder Mary-Beth Bowie, the Huskies' team leader in goals (12) and points (31).

UConn will be stingy on defense, as well. Goalkeeper Maria Yatrakis yields just 0.62 goals per game.

"She made a lot of good saves against us last time," Latham said. "She's very good."



DN File Photo

All-Big 12 defender and senior captain Jenny Benson looks to lead the Huskers past UConn in the round of 16 of the NCAA women's soccer tournament. The Huskers defeated the Huskies 2-0 on Sept. 17.

Husker hoops tip off

Women face test in tourney

BY LINCOLN ARNEAL

After the women's basketball team's loss in its exhibition on Sunday to the Australian Institute of Sport, Coach Paul Sanderford said he wished he could have an extra week of practice before the season started.

He doesn't. It's time for the real thing. The Huskers begin their season tonight against Oakland (Mich.) at 8:05 in the first round of NU's own Time Warner Cable Classic.

After the Huskers' 23-point loss against the Aussies, they have tried to fine-tune their game.

Senior forward Monique Whitfield said: "We have been focusing on the little things like ball fakes and running out at defenders with our hands up."

Sanderford said he had tried several things to raise the level of play.

"What I have attempted do this week is simplify things and really try to ask the kids to do some basic things, but at the same time play hard and compete," he said.

Sanderford also said he needed more physical play on defense from the team, who must use its size and strength more efficiently, he said.

NU's first opponent, Oakland, features guards Beth Zeone and Katie Wolfe, who both averaged more than 17 points last year.

Oakland features one of the top three-point attacks in the nation. In its last exhibition game it shot 8-14 from beyond the arc.

"They shoot the ball exceptionally well," Sanderford said. "They have exceptional guard play from two girls who were all-conference last season."

The Golden Grizzlies suffered a major setback when they lost starting center Sarah Judd to a knee injury.

With its center out and no dominant player in the middle, Oakland will have to change its game plan.

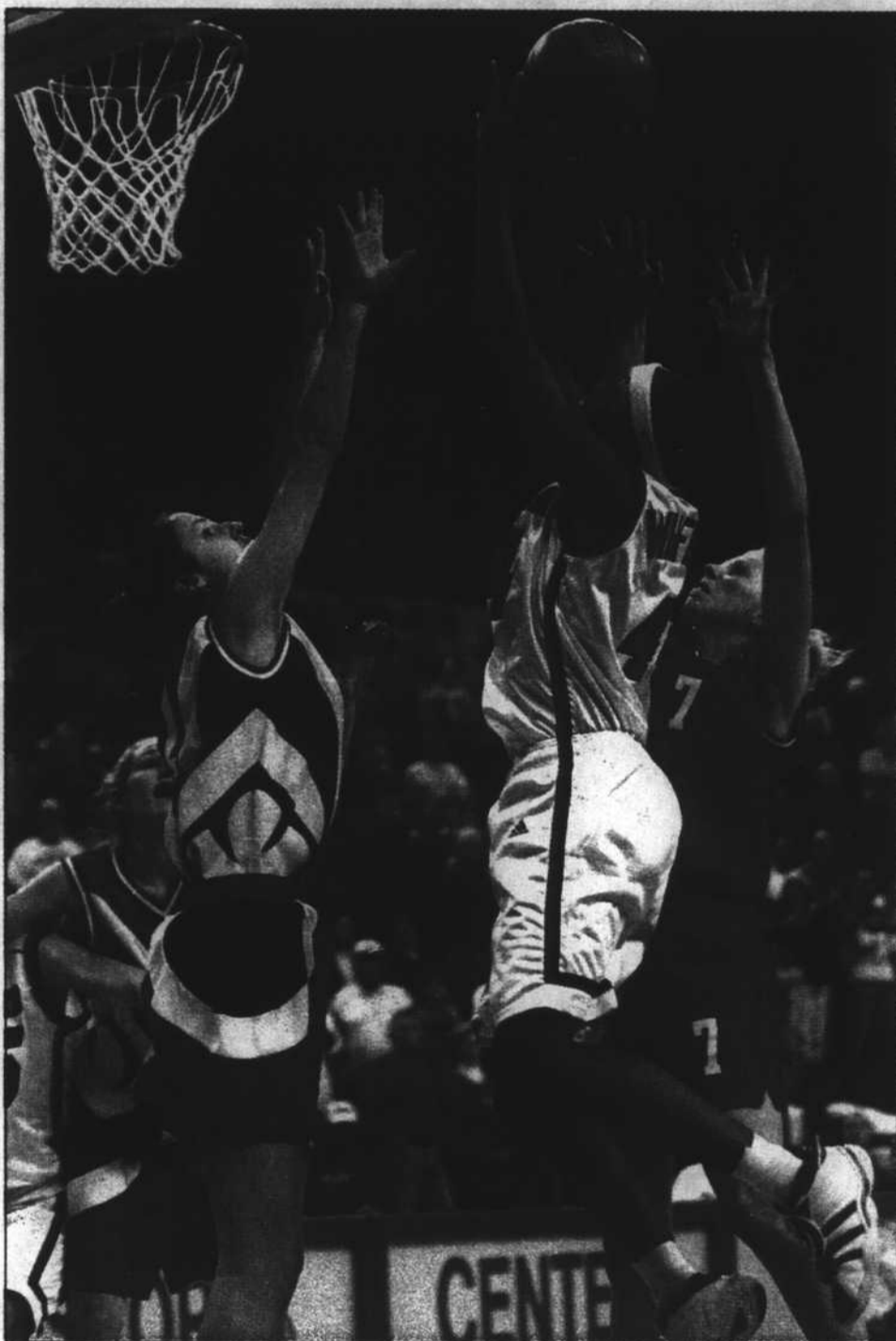
"They will try to spread the floor, try to get our bigger players away from the basket, and drive on us," Sanderford said.

Whitfield is not worried about Oakland's new starting lineup.

"I think we will match up fine because overall we are very quick defensively," Whitfield said.

Nebraska will try to recapture the Time Warner Classic Championship after losing last year to Wisconsin in overtime in the final.

It won't be an easy task, because if they



DN File Photo

NU senior forward Monique Whitfield powers it up in an exhibition game. The Huskers begin regular-season play at home in the Time Warner Cable Classic tonight at 7 against Oakland (Mich.).

get past Oakland in the first round they will likely face No. 25 UC Santa Barbara, which plays Louisville in the first round.

Whitfield said: "I think that (Santa Barbara) will be really good, and we will be able to see where we are at right now."

With the work that the team has done

this week, Sanderford said, he thought the team will be ready to go.

"I look for much improved play this weekend," Sanderford said. "I think we will be more physical, be more aggressive. You will see a more typical Paul Sanderford-type team."

Wrestlers open home season at Coliseum

BY DAVID DIEHL

Nebraska is going on the road for its season home opener. Well, at least down the street.

NU's dual against Wyoming has moved from the Bob Devaney Sports Center down 14th Street to the NU Coliseum because of a scheduling conflict with a women's basketball game.

It will be the first time since the 1996-97 season that the wrestling team has competed in the rustic arena in the middle of campus.

Mark Manning, first-year coach of the sixth-ranked Huskers, said he enjoys the small, cramped quarters of the Coliseum. The surroundings are much unlike the wrestlers' cavernous home at the Devaney Center.

Manning said he wouldn't mind having all of the

home matches at the Coliseum because it would benefit both wrestlers and fans.

"The fans are close, it seats 4,500 people and the environment is great," Manning said. "In wrestling you need that: a close, great crowd. They make it loud, and people get into it, and you feel a part of it when you're a lot closer to the mat."

Manning came from Northern Iowa where the Panthers wrestled in a small on-campus gymnasium that sat 2,000 fans. Smaller arenas also seem to be a favorite of wrestlers, as well.

Brad Vering, the nation's No. 1 197-pounder and defending national champion, said it would be nice to have a home crowd at the Coliseum after spending last weekend wrestling on the East Coast.

"In wrestling you need that: a close, great crowd. They make it loud, and people get into it, and you feel a part of it when you're a lot closer to the mat."

Mark Manning
NU wrestling coach

Nebraska crushed Drexel 35-12 and posted a strong 23-16 victory against Rider last weekend. Vering will be going for his 100th-career victory against the Cowboys. He said the small arenas may help him in that cause as it will probably be a little louder in the tight spaces of the arena.

"When you hear that roar get behind you, it gives you a big lift," said Vering, who is 99-21 at Nebraska.

If the fans come out, they'll be witnessing a Wyoming team that lost four

Volleyball defends clean record at Baylor

BY KRISTEN WATERS

The newly crowned 2000 Big XII champion Nebraska volleyball team will look to start a storm in Waco, Texas, this weekend as the Huskers take on the Baylor Bears Saturday night.

NU will look to move to 26-0 on the season as it faces the Bears on Saturday at 7 p.m.

NU Coach John Cook doesn't think the atmosphere in Waco will rival the rowdy fans of other Big 12 teams.

"Baylor has a big arena so it will take a crowd of a couple thousand before they become a factor," Cook said. "Last time we were there they had a pretty big crowd."

The Huskers faced Baylor earlier in the season before a crowd of 4,128 at the NU coliseum where Nebraska swept the Bears in an easy 15-2, 15-2, 15-10 victory.

In order to walk away with a victory this weekend, Baylor will have to stop the Husker front line. The Bears were unable to stop sophomores Greichaly Cepero, Amber Holmquist and Laura

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